

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No. 9

Kelly Edwards to ask the Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport:

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has announced new powers for Councils to control the spread of HMOs, which come into effect on 25 February 2010. What plans has the Council made to make use of these powers to improve the lot of people in East Reading?"

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport):

The Secretary of State announced changes to the planning regime for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) on 27 January 2010. Statutory Instruments were published on 15 March 2010 and come into force on 6 April.

A new planning use class has been created for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) of up to 6 people. Previously such HMOs were not defined in planning legislation and did not form a specified planning use class within the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order. Prior to the introduction of the new planning use class, local planning authorities have used their own judgement to decide whether an HMO involved a change of use requiring planning permission. For example, from use as a single dwelling house to an HMO. The new use class now makes it clear where, in future, a change of use might occur. For example a Change of Use would occur where an HMO is created of three or more people who do not form a single household as defined by the 2004 Housing Act. To form a single household the residents need to be "related" or "cohabiting". Therefore house shares (including student housing), bedsits and flats where facilities are shared with three or more people will in future need planning permission unless they are already lawful in planning terms on 6 April 2010.

HMOs run by registered social landlords and other public organisations are excluded from the definition of an HMO and are therefore not covered by the Use Class. Equally, as the new HMO use class only relates to small HMOs with up to six people, any larger HMOs will still need planning permission if they are not already lawful in planning terms on 6 April 2010.

The Minister indicated that he was making this change to enable authorities to control the spread of high concentrations of shared rented homes and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The Department of Communities and Local Government commissioned research to consider the validity of various concerns relating to HMOs and to suggest options to address these concerns. Consultation on these papers was carried out during May to August 2009. Reading Borough Council responded to the consultation via a report approved by Cabinet on 6 July 2009, recommending a change in the legislative framework in accordance with the second option, which included bringing HMOs under planning control and establishing a consistent approach between different legislative interpretations of an HMO. The Minister, in his announcement, has agreed with this Council's viewpoints and that is very much welcomed.

While planning permission will be required for any change of use occurring after 6 April 2010, a local planning authority will need to have a policy framework for determining relevant planning applications. A report has been prepared for the Council's Planning Applications Committee on 31 March 2010. This notes that various policies within the council's current planning policy framework relating to residential conversions already refer to "Proposals to convert properties into self contained flats **or for multiple occupation**". This means that the existing saved Local Plan Policy (HSG6) and LDF Core Strategy Policy CS18 can be applied in determining applications to use and convert dwelling houses to HMOs under the new Use Class C4. The Council also has an existing SPG on "House Conversions and Houses in Multiple Occupation," that interprets policies in respect of residential conversions.

Legal advice indicates that existing policies can be used in determining applications for the new use for HMO, particularly those parts of the policies that relate to cumulative impacts. It is intended to review the existing SPG on "House Conversions and Houses in Multiple Occupation" to interpret such development in the light of the adopted Core Strategy Policy. Planning Applications Committee on 31 March 2010 is being asked to note that officers propose to review this SPG as soon as practicable and that it should, at the same time, interpret existing policies in relation to the changes that will come into force on 6 April 2010. This will look in particular at the issues that need to be addressed in areas in the Borough where there are areas of high concentrations of HMOs including East Reading.

We recognize that HMOs make an important contribution to the private rented sector by providing housing to meet the needs of specific groups and households and by making a contribution to the overall provision of affordable housing stock. However, problems caused by high concentrations of HMOs have been highlighted by Reading and a number of other towns and cities across the country.

As the Minister says in the Impact Assessment accompanying the Statutory Instrument *'The concentration of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) can result in unintended consequences that can create friction with the local community and can also lead to both positive and negative effects upon a local housing market area including social, economic, as well as environmental and physical impacts. Particular concern has been raised about the impact of HMOs occupied by students. These concerns focus around the creation of summer 'ghost towns', increased noise, litter, pressure on car parking and anti-social behaviour. Government intervention is required to allow local authorities greater control over the unwanted effects of HMOs where there are problems.'*

I am confident that these latest developments will be warmly welcomed in East Reading as well as in other parts of the town faced with concentrations of HMOs.

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QUESTION NO. 2 in accordance with Standing Order No. 9

Marian Livingston to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Lifelong Learning:

School Funding

Would the Lead Councillor for Education please comment, in the light of changes to funding in schools over, say, the last fifteen years, on Conservative claims that Labour has failed to properly fund local schools and that they would do better?

REPLY by Councillor Hartley (Lead Councillor for Education and Lifelong Learning):

I was astounded to see the Conservative's claim in their recent local election leaflet that Labour has "failed to properly fund local schools" and that they will "seek to increase funding". I noticed that they had not mentioned any figures when making this claim, which is odd, because there are plenty available.

Official "Section 52" returns by Reading Borough Council to the Department for Children, Schools & Families show that funding per pupil has over the eleven years of Labour control increased in real terms by 56.8% for primary and 39.1% for secondary. The difference that funding has made can be clearly seen in our schools, more teachers, more assistants, more ICT and equipment.

When Labour Reading took responsibility for education from Berkshire County Council, Ofsted itself acknowledged the poor legacy of school buildings in the town. Since then, £125 Million has been invested in Reading's school buildings over that time, vastly more than Conservative-controlled Berkshire County Council managed in the previous decade. Reading Borough Council delivered where Conservative Berkshire could or would not, for projects like Norcot Nursery, George Palmer Primary and Highdown Hall as well as transformational projects like the new Avenue and Madejski Academy that are beyond the scope of what was considered possible in the 1990s.

And we have seen the results of those investments in the achievements of our young people. Since RBC has been the LEA: persistent truancy levels have fallen to amongst the lowest in the country; permanent exclusions from our schools have fallen from 35 in 1999 to just 2 in 2009; and the number of those leaving school without any qualifications, effectively failed by our education system, has fallen from a shameful 1 in 9 to less than 1 in 330. Whilst those achieving 5 A*- C grades at GCSE, the most common judgement of how well young people are being educated, has risen from 4 out of every 10 to 7, from well below the national average to consistently above.

We all know that the improvements in Reading have been driven by the hard work of teachers and their pupils in the classroom, effectively supported by parents, school management and support staff and teams across the Council & other public services. But they could not have happened without the strategy and investment that Labour, both locally and nationally, has provided.

Not that this kind of support for improving schools has happened everywhere. We have seen recently how the Conservatives in West Berkshire have failed to invest similarly,

their entire capital investment in Reading West schools has amounted to only 3/4 of what RBC has spent on Prospect School alone. If Reading Conservatives want to convince local people that their party has changed and schools would be properly supported, then their local colleagues' record doesn't help.

However, we all know that the level of public spending will have to fall in coming years, and that is what makes the Tory's claims so unrealistic. Any political party would struggle to match Labour's funding record since 1997. The Government has made it clear that school funding is a priority and will continue to rise in real terms, through to 2013. But the Conservative Party is committed to including education in their "swingeing cuts" at national level, and of course, to a Council Tax freeze locally. For them to claim that they will "seek to increase funding" without any suggestion of how they could do that; would be laughable if only it didn't have such serious consequences for the future hopes and chances of young people in Reading.

QUESTION NO. 3 in accordance with Standing Order No. 9

Marian Livingston to ask the Lead Councillor for Children's Services:

SureStart Centres

Would the Lead Councillor for Children's Services comment on Conservative claims of support for SureStart Centres, in the context of reports in the press of the views of the Conservative Chair of the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Panel?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Children's Services):

I would like to thank the member of the public for her question and her widespread concerns amongst the public of the potential closure of SureStart centres should the Tories come to power, Locally and nationally.

I am unsure whether the views of the Conservative Chair of the Education & Children's Scrutiny Panel are his own personal view or those of the Reading Conservative Group. But it is clear that he questions the validity of SureStart by his quote "penetration of some initiatives eg MEND/Surestart/Streetgames seems low and suggests the need for rigorous evaluation and cost/benefit analysis. With inevitable pressure on LA budgets a clear understanding of programmes' relative effectiveness would seem essential if there is to be a prioritisation of programmes in the future".

That quote confirms that SureStart is under threat from the Tories. Opposition Chancellor George Osborne has also confirmed that SureStart budgets will not be ringfenced and £200m will be cut from the SureStart budget. Opposition Leader David Cameron firstly boasted that the SureStart initiative would be closed before he made his characteristic u turn because of public pressure.

Ending of SureStart would mean the closure of the Children's Centres throughout Reading, including Caversham, Whitley, Katesgrove and Southcote; an end to child and family health services, ranging from Health Visitors to breastfeeding support, the ending of childcare and early learning, vital services for children under 5 years old and their parents would also be negatively impacted. Other services at risk of ending SureStart include advice on parenting, healthy eating advice or managing help with money.

Be clear SureStart is not safe from the Tories.

SureStart is an excellent facility created by the Labour Government to invest in all our children and to assist parents develop their children with childcare facilities, programmes for children and parents and children's centres for the enjoyment and learning of all our children, including the most vulnerable in our society. SureStart has made a massive contribution to the wellbeing of our children, some of which cannot be measured by targets or a cost/benefit analysis. I would like to thank the staff at SureStart for their excellent work in assisting the wellbeing of children and families.

Only the return of a Labour Government nationally and the Labour Council locally will permanently safeguard SureStart and assist in the development and wellbeing of our children. SureStart is only safe with Labour.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 2 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Merriott to ask the Lead Councillor for Culture and Sport:

Library Services

Would the Lead Councillor please update this Council on the latest satisfaction, visit and lending figures for our library services and inform us how this compares with previous years?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Culture and Sport):

The picture for libraries, in Reading at least, is looking good.

On satisfaction ratings - The Adult Public Library Users Survey carried out this year shows that satisfaction with library services overall and with the customer service provided by staff remains consistently high, with around 91% of library users rating the service overall as very good or good, and over 96% of our users rating customer service specifically as very good or good.

This is reflected in Reading Borough Libraries increasing issue and visits figures, with over 760,000 visitors each year borrowing over 1 million items in 2008/9.

This figure is likely to rise to nearly 790,000 visitors and 1.06 million issues in 2009/10 (based on figures for the first three quarters of the year), giving a 3% increase in both issues and visits over the previous year.

This improvement in performance is due to a combination of factors and to changes that have been made to services including:

1. Our ability to help Reading residents throughout their lives, including:
 - Giving out Bookstart packs to get all children on the road to literacy, Running Rhyme time and story time sessions, which support the development of language skills.
 - Providing the Toy Library, which is an important resource at a time when the future may not be financially secure for all parents.
 - Providing services and stock to improve life skills and knowledge. For example, in response to the needs of the local community, a work and employment section has been set up at the Central Library to help those who have been affected by the current financial downturn.
 - Helping to support the elderly in their own homes by the provision of the Mobile Library Service, taking books to those who are unable to visit libraries through ill health.
2. An improved range of services. As well the more traditional lending and information services, activities such as rhyme time, coffee mornings, author talks, children's crafts and free Internet access help to encourage new and existing library users to make use of their local libraries. Big events such as the Reading Festival of Crime Writing help to raise the profile of libraries and of the Council.

3. Council investment and a successful BIG lottery bid, leading to improvements at all libraries over the last three years, making our libraries more usable and attractive to visit.
4. Changing work practices and more efficient deployment of staff, leading to an increase in opening hours across the borough of 35 hours per week, while at the same time reducing staff costs.
5. More efficient stock purchasing and a programme of in depth analysis of stock and layout at each library, targeting stock and services to each library's local community, and thereby increasing visits, issues and satisfaction ratings.

There are some who say that libraries are an anachronism in the age of Google, Amazon and cheap supermarket books and a sadly large number of councils around the country seem to agree, cutting opening hours, book stock budgets and branches.

Our experience in Reading shows that it doesn't have to be like this and that as we have invested in our branches, maintained and improved book stocks and expanded opening hours and services the popularity of and the use of our libraries continues to rise. This is an achievement that I believe this council should all be very proud of.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 3 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Warman to ask the Lead Councillor for Children's Services:

Foster Carers

Could the Lead Councillor advise me:

- a. How many potential foster carers there are currently on Reading Borough Council's books;
- b. How many of these currently have children in their care;
- c. How many foster carers have withdrawn of their own volition or been withdrawn at RBC's instigation in the current year to date and the previous year (2008-2009)?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Children's Services):

- a) Reading has 87 foster carers approved across the various schemes. This includes 24 carers for disabled children, and 11 foster carers who are also approved as Supported Lodgings for 16+ young people. In addition, there are a further 18 Foster Carers who are looking after children in their own extended families.
- b) Between 80 and 85 foster carers have children placed with them at any one time. Carers will occasionally put themselves on hold to have a break, or may be between placements. The range or type of approval for a Foster carer may mean that they sometimes have to wait for the correct child to be matched with them.
- c) In 2008/9, three foster carers resigned due to changes in circumstances such as moving house or having babies. The number of foster carers who had their approval terminated by Foster Panel was one.
In the current year, 2009/10, we have had one resignation to date, and one set of Foster carers who had their approval terminated.

In most years there are around 4-6 Foster Carers who leave the service. There are six Independent Fostering Agencies operating in the Reading area who are competing with us to recruit foster carers, and to our knowledge in the past two years we have had no resignations of our foster carers to join these independent agencies.

QUESTION NO. 4 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Warman to ask the Lead Councillor for Children's Services:

Foster Carers

It was reported to Council on 26 January 2010 that Reading Borough Council is currently recruiting foster parents. Could the Lead Councillor advise me:

- a. What is the timescale of this recruitment?
- b. What is the target increase in available foster carers?
- c. How many aspiring foster parents have been turned down in 2009-2010 and 2008-2009?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Children's Services):

- a) The service has recently updated its Recruitment and Retention Strategy, a copy of which will be going to the next Parenting Panel, this has planned activity for recruitment activity up to and including December 2010, although in reality the service is never not looking to recruit foster carers.
- b) The target increase is to achieve a pool of 100 foster carers spread over the various foster schemes, and age groups.
 - We would want to achieve our largest increase in foster carers for young babies and 0-5 year-olds, as that is where we have had particular pressures over previous months.
 - We are also aware that we have to do better in recruiting foster carers from black minority ethnic groups to achieve a number proportionate to the numbers of black minority ethnic children in our care. We also need to recruit more foster carers from the Asian community to offer short break care for some of our disabled children and families.
 - Our newly appointed Recruitment Officer has worked with the marketing and PR service to create a comprehensive recruitment year planner of events for the next year, which focuses on maintaining a continuous level of awareness within and outside the Council through press articles, information evenings, publicity displays, and taking opportunities to disseminate information wherever possible through links with community groups.
- c) There have been no applicants to foster who have been turned down by Foster Panel. There are, however, always a number of prospective applicants who withdraw at various stages of the process because their circumstance change, or they discover through attending a preparation group or discussion with a social worker, that the fostering is not for them.

Research suggests that only around 8-10% of initial enquiries come through to assessment and approval as foster carers. Reading does somewhat better than this, as between April and December 2009 there were 117 enquiries, 33 of whom attended preparation groups and 25 of who then progressed to assessment and approval, which is 21%. Having said this however we are looking for the whole Council to support the Family Placement Team in recruiting new foster carers. Should you be able to raise the profile of fostering for Reading in your travels I would be most grateful.

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QUESTION NO. 5 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Cumpsty to ask the Lead Councillor for Culture and Sport:

Tree Removal

Why were none of the Caversham Ward Councillors notified or consulted by you, the Cabinet Member responsible for Culture and Sport, before one of the oldest and most beautiful trees in our Ward was chopped down?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Culture and Sport):

I'm assuming that Councillor Cumpsty's question is about the felling of the long dead horse chestnut tree in Westfield Road Rec. The tree was confirmed as dead in May 2009 but first reported as having died the previous year in 2008. Two further reports were made by local residents including one in January this year by a resident who was concerned that the tree would fall on their house.

The council's tree officer had monitored the condition of the dead tree during which time the amount of wood rotting fungus was seen to increase significantly.

The decision to fell the tree was made by the tree officer for two main reasons.

- 1) It had been dead for approximately a year and was deteriorating
- 2) It was becoming a danger to the public as the canopy was over the footpath and could fall into the road.

As the tree had been dead for at least 14 months and it was believed most of the local community and park users were aware it was dead, the officers did not believe it necessary to advise councillors prior to its felling.

The procedure that the Parks team had been operating to up until the dead tree at Westfield Road was felled was that the lead councillor and, subsequently, ward councillors would be informed prior to the felling of a living (healthy or sick) tree whilst the felling of dead trees was considered to be business as usual.

As Councillor Cumpsty is aware, following our email exchange on 9 February, this protocol has now been amended at my request so that, in future, the lead councillor, and then ward councillors, is informed prior to the removal of prominent dead trees as well as the diseased and living.

I'm sure Council will be pleased to learn that a new horse chestnut has been planted to replace the dead tree.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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QUESTION NO. 6 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Steele to ask the Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport:

Funding to Tackle Flooding

In August 2009 the Government announced that Local authorities could bid for funding to tackle surface water flooding. Did the Council bid for funding and if so what was the outcome?

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport):

As part of the Government's response to the Pitt Review, ministers announced investment of £15m to help local authorities coordinate and lead local flood management work.

On 18 August 2009 ministers announced how the £15m would be allocated to local authorities. I am pleased to reiterate that Reading Borough Council received £150K for development of a Surface Water Management Plan which will be coming to the meeting of Cabinet in June. An early draft of the SWMP has already been considered by CCEA Scrutiny Panel. Only a few authorities are working on pilot SWMPs and Reading Borough Council is ahead of most authorities who will be required to produce their own SWMPs at a later date.

In August 2009 Reading Borough Council responded to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and made two bids for surface water flood protection funding following the Government's announcement. An application was made as part of the 'early action bid for tackling surface water risk' for South Reading/Kingsley Close. This bid was successful and on 19 March 2010 RBC was awarded the maximum grant settlement of £100K which has to be spent during the current financial year. Reading was one of 49 local authorities chosen to benefit from the overall funding pot of £5.3m and one of a minority across the country to be awarded the maximum allocation of £100K.

Kingsley Close was among the streets in Whitley which suffered from significant flooding of homes on 20 July 2007. An estimated 4 inches of rain fell in the space of a few hours and created substantial amounts of surface water flooding. This was compounded by further heavy rainfall over the following week and has created subsequent problems in the area. Other streets affected included Whitley Wood Lane, Merrivale Gardens, Heatherden Close and Wincanton Road.

While the successful bid was made for Kingsley Close, the works which result will benefit the wider Whitley area. As part of the £65m junction 11 improvement scheme, significant works have already taken place over the past few months including extensive ditch clearing and pipe cleaning works, with further ditch clearing and upgrading of grilles planned around the A33.

The £100K funding just announced by DEFRA will go toward some extra ditch clearing works in the area, and further surface water sewer overflow works from the Kingsley

Close area towards the water course along the side of the A33. This work is intended to protect the whole of the South Reading/Kingsley Close area during heavy rainfall.

Reading Borough Council's Highway team will now be looking to install the proposed overflow sewer as soon as practical in the coming financial year.

I am grateful to Cllr Steele for allowing me the opportunity to highlight another important example of public spending by the Government that would be threatened by a Conservative Government committed to slashing public expenditure and which has to date given no commitment to continuing this sort of important funding.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 7 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Steele to ask the Leader of the Council:

Interpreting Service Savings

What is the estimated savings to the Council for the introduction from the 1st April 2010 of the Big Word Telephone Interpreting Service?

REPLY by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

From the 1st April 2010 the Council will use the Big Word for all telephone interpretation and the translation of documents. The Big Word will provide these services more cheaply.

Based on current usage and a cheaper unit cost, savings in 2010/11 are forecast to be £4,000 for telephone interpreting.

Also, on the basis of the services provided by this company, we have been able to reduce staffing costs, making savings of £32,000 per annum from 2011/12 onwards.

However, and I am sure Cllr Steele will agree, the most important issue is the service to residents, and I am asking officers to monitor the new system to ensure it achieves a good service for residents using the Big Word.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 8 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Steele to ask the Leader of the Council:

Sick Leave

What is the average number of days of sick leave that were taken by the staff in the year 2009?

REPLY by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

The average number of working days lost per employee for 2009 was 10.8 days across the Council as a whole. However, this is a key performance indicator and each directorate is actively looking at ways in which it can develop and introduce initiatives to reduce the levels of sickness absence and improve its management techniques.

On the basis that attendance management is most effective when based on complete and accurate data, the Council has undertaken a major initiative to improve absence recording and reporting in the past two years. This is now sustained by an ongoing regime of monitoring and chasing returns (including 'nil' returns) to ensure that all absences are reported for all services and teams. This resulted in an increase to the 'working days lost' headline figure, but more importantly led on to the second phase of the project - a coordinated approach aimed at reducing that figure.

Action to address sickness absence now incorporates:

Improved absence data provided to managers on a regular basis - including detail of absence occurrences and patterns for all staff, and 'traffic light' indicators to prompt management action;

The managers' **Absence Management Toolkit** - taking managers through the key elements of effective attendance management. Assisting managers in taking action if an employee is absent, providing guidance on how to monitor absence, how to develop and apply consistent standards for attendance and how to ensure that staff are motivated and committed to attend work. Attendance management focuses not only on monitoring absence but also establishing the causes of non-attendance from which active attendance strategies can be devised and implemented;

Absence Management interactive workshops - intensive intervention for peer groups of managers where attendance management problems have been identified, facilitated by HR Partners.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 9 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Chowdhary to ask the Lead Councillor for Children's Services:

Supervision of Offenders

Would the Lead Councillor for Children's Services please advise:

- i) the ratio of supervisors to Youth Offenders when undertaking tasks in the community;
- ii) what special training these supervisors have undertaken; and
- iii) what measures are taken to ensure that there are no offenders with a sexual interest in children who are sent to work in parks or play areas where children are to be found?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Children's Services):

- (i) This is subject to risk assessment. Most Reparation/Community Payback is supervised on a one-to-one basis. In appropriate cases the supervisor may take up to three young people at one time, but this is unusual and only where the normal behaviour of the young people concerned is known and there is sufficient evidence that they will likely function well in a small group (e.g. low risk cases with no known behavioural issues).
- (ii) Usually reparation placements are supervised by a specific Restorative Justice Officer within the team whose main responsibility is to identify placements and supervise young people undertaking them. The worker concerned is trained in Health & Safety Level 2, Appointed Person's first aid, risk assessment, risk management and a number of other areas related to working with young people. He is currently undertaking a degree in Youth Justice. We are planning to recruit volunteers to assist with this task. They will also undertake risk assessment, risk management, safeguarding and working with young people training (delivered internally to the Youth Offending Service (YOS) by a skilled trainer). We are also exploring whether community wardens may take young people on Reparation Placements and supervise these placements. The benefit of this is that young people will be making amends for their behaviour directly to their own community, and building links with the Wardens in the process. As with volunteers, suitable training will be provided.
- (iii) All placements are individually risk assessed. Sex offenders will not be placed in specific placements where young children would be present or likely to be present. Some work may be undertaken in public areas where children may pass (for example, an allotment) but will be supervised on a one-to-one basis to prevent any chance link/contact being made. Convictions for sex offences are not common in the 10-17 age group with whom the YOS works and those who are are subject to additional assessment of the risk they may represent to children, and to a comprehensive, multi-agency management plan.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 10 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Chowdhary to ask the Lead Councillor for Children's Services:

ContactPoint

Following a recently reported breach of ContactPoint security, Cllr Ralph asked for this to be investigated. But, within the context of the widespread industry belief that 'there is no such thing as a totally secure system' Deloitte made a number of recommendations following a Security Review of ContactPoint for the DCSF in 2008:

- "that further controls are introduced over the access to data by central system users such as database administrators and report programmers"
- "that processes are defined for the secure disposal of electronic and hardcopy media"
- "that clear guidance about information security matters is provided to all helpdesk staff"

"... It should be reported that risk can only be managed, not eliminated, and therefore there will always be a risk of data security incidents occurring. What is important is that all practical steps to reduce the risk of incidents occurring are taken and when an incident occurs, that it is handled and managed effectively... We identified a number of minor security failings over how the local data quality tool (LDQT) was being used."

".... That the DCSF participate in government-wide security initiatives to maintain and enhance roles, responsibilities and accountability for the security of systems such as ContactPoint..."

Since the security of our children must be paramount and, one must assume, ContactPoint was set up with this objective in mind, can the Lead Councillor please confirm that the above recommendations will all have been addressed before Reading implements the system?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Children's Services):

Please see the response below from the national team regarding ContactPoint security in respect of the Deloitte review in 2008.

In response to the final paragraph regarding implementation in Reading, ContactPoint is an ongoing implementation and is already being accessed in Reading. Reading gained accreditation in November 2009, since then 38 practitioners have been trained and are currently accessing ContactPoint. One primary school has already gained accreditation and will be attending training in March.

Work will begin on preparing the first local database to feed ContactPoint during March 2010.

Response from National Team - February 2010

ContactPoint security briefing

ContactPoint has significant security measures and controls in place, which are continually assessed by DCSF and its expert advisors.

The Deloitte review confirmed that robust measures are in place for the security of ContactPoint and acknowledged that the importance of security is ingrained within the project. The review did not find any areas of significant weakness.

Since the release of the Deloitte report in 2008, UK national policy for Information Assurance has developed greatly. ContactPoint has fully embraced all national security policy and is fully compliant with Government methodology for information security. As a result of meeting Government requirements for the protection of data, ContactPoint has in fact addressed all of the Deloitte findings and has gone far beyond those recommendations alone.

ContactPoint has full traceability of all known risks and the controls and mitigations that are designed to address those risks. Many of these controls meet the strict policy mandated by the Cabinet Office for security.

ContactPoint has been designed, implemented and is managed using industry and UK Government best practice standards for security. It has undergone many levels of testing and design review both before and since the Deloitte review. ContactPoint is Government accredited for security and is compliant with the international standard for information security management (ISO/IEC 27001).

All organisations and systems must meet ContactPoint accreditation criteria before they can grant users access or feed data to ContactPoint. Accreditation is one of the means to provide assurance that ContactPoint is under management control and is being used appropriately, including compliance with security and data quality requirements.

Access to ContactPoint is strictly limited to those who need it to do their job. All users must have completed identity checks, enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and mandatory training. Training for ContactPoint users includes the safe and appropriate use of the system, and the importance of compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998. To access the system users need a unique user name, password and/or security token and PIN. All users are made aware that use of ContactPoint is monitored and that misuse may result in disciplinary action or criminal procedures.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 11 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Townend to ask the Leader of the Council:

IT Operations and Infrastructure

Many organisations, from both the public sector and commercial sector, are finding that keeping up with the pace of change in the field of Information Technology (IT) is both a costly and time-consuming exercise. They can't afford to keep 'up to date' with changes in hardware and software, and they can't afford the people with the right skills that change rapidly. Organisations of all shapes and sizes recognise that they need to reduce the cost of running their IT systems and concentrate on their core business activities.

Does the Leader of the Council think that Reading Borough Council is in this position and would she please answer the following questions relating to the fitness for purpose of the Council's IT operations and infrastructure:

- How many incidents of unplanned system 'downtime' have there been in the last two years, which departments were affected and what was the impact on council services to customers?
- How many instances have there been in the last two years where computer hardware, software or network failure has caused a loss of data? What data was lost?
- Is an IT disaster recovery plan in place to be implemented in the event of major systems failure, what are the recovery time objectives and how often is the disaster recovery plan tested?
- Why are the majority of the hardware, desk top terminals and servers over eight years old and why have they not been updated?
- What problems have been caused to the operation of the Council's services and operations by not having up-to-date versions of software installed?
- Does the Council have asset management procedures in place for keeping track of the hardware and software inventory and configuration management, both for support purposes and to ensure that the Council is paying for the correct number of licences that it uses?
- What are the service level agreements (SLAs) in place with Council's IT service providers (performance, availability etc.) and how many times have these service levels not been met?
- How many times have the Council's IT service providers paid penalties to the Council for non-performance or failure to meet SLAs?
- What steps have this Council taken to explore the possibility of securing an IT services contract for its IT service provision which would allow hardware and software to be updated on a regular basis?

REPLY by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

Question 1

- How many incidents of unplanned system 'downtime' have there been in the last two years, which departments were affected and what was the impact on council services to customers?

Answer 1

Priority 1: Systems Down:- Major impact with one or more departments being unable to provide any of their contracted services to their customers.

Overall there are 129 sites using IT Services, in excess of 300 individual applications systems in operational use, over 400 networked printers, 2,500 desktops and in excess of 1,500 telephone extensions in central offices. The response time target for this priority is 'immediate' with a target fix time of '2 hours'. There have been 83 incidents of unplanned downtime in the last 2 years.

This is analysed between:

- 26 Software Incidents
- 4 Hardware Incidents
- 44 Telephone Incidents
- 7 Network Incidents
- 2 Power Outage Incidents

(Data Source - Priority 1 calls recorded by Northgate Service Desk - of these 75% fixed in target time).

Departments affected include:

- In Civic Offices and Fountain House (Security Lodge, Electoral Registration, Planning Department, Accountancy, Revenues and Benefits Team, Legal, Payroll)
- Hexagon Theatre, Palmer Park Library, Prospect Park Hospital, Tanfield House, Central Library, Call Centre, The Avenue Centre (Homecare Team)
- All departments Darwin Close

However many of these have been of a short duration, and not necessarily in control of the Council or its direct Outsourced partners (eg faults in third party systems, external power loss to the building).

Inconvenience to customers has been minimised on front line services by taking customer contact details and calling back and doing other office based activities whilst the specific facility was unavailable.

Question 2

- How many instances have there been in the last two years where computer hardware, software or network failure has caused a loss of data? What data was lost?

Answer 2

There have been zero instances of electronic data loss in the last 2 years.

(Data Source: - Priority 1 calls recorded by the Northgate Service Desk and supported by responses by Directorate IT Teams. For those Services provided to the Council by other than Northgate and Pinacl there have been no instances of electronic data loss.)

Question 3

- Is an IT disaster recovery plan in place to be implemented in the event of major systems failure, what are the recovery time objectives and how often is the disaster recovery plan tested?

Answer 3

Within the local ICT Services provided through Northgate Information Solutions and Pinacl Solutions the Council has a disaster recovery plan for ICT which is supported by a Sunguard Contract (which protects against hardware failure and loss) and a resilient new Data Centre within the Civic Offices designed to run independent of the Civic itself (as a stand alone unit).

The Council is also working through a staged ICT Infrastructure refresh programme which has included fast backup and recovery enhancements, tiered data storage solutions, and server virtualisation which together provide the foundations for cost effective disaster recovery or business continuity solutions and recovery from other physical locations.

System recovery options will recover hardware to the Council's Date Centre on a 24hr response basis, with server rebuild and recovery times likely to add a further 24-36 hours. This has been tested and invoked on a number of occasions when server hardware has failed.

The Council is currently investigating options for a further shared services arrangement for low cost Data Centre disaster recovery with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead as this will offer a lower cost solution than alternative commercial arrangements to protect against Data Centre failure. The ICT Infrastructure Programme hardware refresh currently underway will facilitate both disaster recovery and business continuity options on a ranging level of costs subject to the systems and recovery times specific services require.

Other Managed Service arrangements for Corporate Systems not run locally by Northgate Information Solutions have separate disaster recovery arrangements through the specific supplier.

Question 4

Why are the majority of the hardware, desk top terminals and servers over eight years old and why have they not been updated?

Answer 4

The majority of hardware and desktop terminals are not over eight years old.

There is a major refresh of servers under way (as part of a virtualisation programme), and a desktop placement programme which has been approved by Cabinet with a target completion date of 31 May 2010.

Question 5

- What problems have been caused to the operation of the Council's services and operations by not having up-to-date versions of software installed?

Answer 5

The Council seeks to keep its major system applications up to date and often this is driven by a need to maintain legislative compliance.

Desktop software is maintained at levels necessary for staff to do their work rather than pay for enhancements to software which will not be made use of (eg on Microsoft Office functionality the average user uses less than 8% of available functionality).

A change of software is therefore driven by business and legislative compliance needs rather than a software vendor's needs. Generally free conversion software readers are available to convert documents sent to the Council from more modern releases of specific software. Document exchange within the Council when running consistent software is not a major problem. Again the aim has been to ensure maximum return on investment from ICT purchases and only upgrading where there are clear business drivers to do so.

Question 6

- Does the Council have asset management procedures in place for keeping track of the hardware and software inventory and configuration management, both for support purposes and to ensure that the Council is paying for the correct number of licences that it uses?

Answer 6

The Council has asset management procedures in place which are maintained by the Council's ICT Outsourced Providers Northgate Information Solutions and Pinacl Solutions. This activity is part of their contractual obligations to the Council. Configuration Management databases recording asset information and further discovery tools are used to interrogate devices on the Councils network for spot checks. Licence numbers for Microsoft software are checked using Altiris (Northgate's discovery tool). The Council is also now planning to revalidate software assets as part of the recently agreed Desktop Refresh programme.

Question 7

- What are the service level agreements (SLA's) in place with Council's IT service providers (performance, availability etc) and how many times have these service levels not been met?

Answer 7

Service Level Agreements are in place for both the major Outsourced Contracts the Council has with Northgate Information Solutions and Pinacl Solutions.

The Service Level Agreements set service standards which must be met and are monitored by the Council. All calls to the Northgate Service desk are classified subject to impact level assessments ranging from Priority 1 to 4 (with 1 being critical business impact and a high priority to resolve).

Priority 1 incidents require an immediate response and a 2 hour target fix, ranging through to Priority 4 incidents which require a 1 working day response and a 5 working day target fix.

Over the last 2 years, NIS has failed to meet their aggregated SLA target of 85% of all incidents (Priority 1 to Priority 4) to be resolved within their stated SLA times on 4 occasions.

PINACL has failed to meet a 100% target (Priority 1 to Priority 4) on 20 occasions (mainly telephone related).

This outcome equates to an average of one failure within all categories per month across both companies.

Further evidence of key targets and performance achieved include:

- Customer Satisfaction - Target 5 Achieved 4.24 (over 24 months)
- Server Availability - Target 99% Achieved 99.9% (over 24 months)

Further Managed Service arrangements exist within individual Directorates and these have their own separate defined contract and performance requirements. Directorate IT Teams report that service targets have been achieved.

Question 8

- How many times have the Council's IT service providers paid penalties to the Council for non-performance or failure to meet SLA's?

Answer 8

Performance is monitored monthly by Corporate IT and any service deficiencies are reimbursed to the Council either in Service Credits or in cash payments or by provision of consultancy, training or other services at no cost to the Council. Such information is commercially sensitive.

Question 9

- What steps have this Council taken to explore the possibility of securing an IT services contract for its IT service provision which would allow hardware and software to be updated on a regular basis?

Answer 9

The existing Northgate Information Solutions and Pinacl Solutions contracts have a Technology Refresh provision within them already. This is supported by further capital investment where changes have been necessary outside of the scope envisaged by the original arrangements.

Many of the managed services the council operates in parallel to its main IT Outsourcing contracts include refresh provision for the hardware and software. Examples include Oracle Financials, Careworks Raise (Social Services Client databases), Capita Academy (Revenues and Benefits), Information@Work (electronic document management system), Midland Trent (payroll and Human Resources) and Landcharges.

The Council will be exploring a revised technology refresh provision as part of the scope of works included within the ICT procurement now under way. This will ensure the Council's ICT Infrastructure remains fit for purpose and responsive to the changing business requirements which will occur within the lifetime of the new contracts.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 12 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Ralph to ask the Leader of the Council:

Human Rights and Data Protection

In March 2009, the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust found that 11 of 46 government database projects “almost certainly” breached human rights and data protection legislation (including ContactPoint, the DNA database and National Identity Register), 29 were classed as amber - systems with significant problems/potential legal problems and only 6 were classed as green.

In Computing, (23/3/09) JRRT were reported to claim that “more than half of the systems have significant problems with privacy or effectiveness and could fall foul of a legal challenge.”

Since the CRB was set up in 2002, over 15,000 complaints have been upheld against it. In 2008 the Sunday Times found that the CRB was passing files to more than 50 recruitment agencies.

In relation to any process such as CRB checks or the Vetting & Barring Scheme, what will this Administration do:

- i) to protect the Human Rights of its employees and Councillors?
- ii) to indemnify them against errors, should these occur when undergoing checks as a requirement of their Council responsibilities?
- iii) to ensure that personal information of its employees and Councillors is not sold?

REPLY by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

With regard to Councillor Ralph’s last three questions concerning CRB checks and the Vetting & Barring Scheme:

i) The Council takes the human rights and privacy of all its staff and Councillors very seriously and acts to protect these interests at all times. Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998, gives everyone a right to respect for their private and family life, their home and their correspondence. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The Council considers all information and data to be an asset of the Council and seeks to control and manage it as such through appropriate policies, procedures, protocols and staff training.

CRB checks are taken under guidance of the Central Human Resources Unit to avoid unnecessary or inappropriate checks being undertaken. For Reading Borough Council

checks, a copy is sent from the CRB to HR and separately to the employee and not shared elsewhere. The result is confirmed to the recruiting manager. No electronic record is stored of the actual CRB declaration document or application form. Inappropriate requests for a CRB check to be initiated will be turned down.

Organisations that wish to use CRB checks must comply with the CRB's Code of Practice - and this is the case for this Council. The Code of Practice is intended to ensure - and to provide assurance to those applying for Standard and Enhanced Disclosures - that the information released will be used fairly. The Code also seeks to ensure that sensitive personal information is handled and stored appropriately and is kept for only as long as necessary.

Anybody who receives Standard or Enhanced Disclosure information must abide by the Code of Practice. This includes Registered Bodies (Reading Borough Council) and recruiters and others receiving such information.

The Code of Practice states that Disclosure information should only be used in the context of a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, designed to protect applicants from unfair discrimination on the basis of non-relevant past convictions. The Council has developed such a policy.

Storage of Disclosure information is also important. Within the Council it is held securely in locked cabinets. The Code of Practice requires that the information revealed is considered only for the purpose for which it was obtained. It should be destroyed after a suitable period has passed - usually not more than six months.

Organisations must therefore use Disclosure information fairly, and ensure that it is handled and stored securely and appropriately. They must also satisfy the CRB that they are complying with the Code of Practice, which means co-operating with requests from the CRB to undertake assurance checks, as well as reporting any suspected malpractice in relation to the Code or misuse of Disclosures. The Council has been audited by the CRB in respect of compliance with the Code, with a positive outcome.

ii) Central HR only acts on CRB disclosures or Vetting and Barring Scheme results with specific relevance to the job role or function that required the disclosure. Non-relevant information to the specific role or function will not be acted upon or shared inappropriately.

The Police Act 1997 prevents any person from disclosing the information contained in a CRB check to a third party, or the fact that a CRB check has revealed no information.

The Data Protection Act 1998 requires an organisation to keep personal data secure and up-to-date, and not to share that data with another person or organisation (a third party) without the consent of the individual concerned (unless a specific exemption applies).

Therefore, if we received an FOIA request, our response would be that the data requested was exempt under para. 40 (confidential information) and not disclose it. This is an absolute exemption, and not subject to a public interest test.

With regard to indemnity, this would be given under the Council's insurance policy in respect of a financial loss caused by an error where an employee was acting within the statutory powers and functions of the Council, and where, if that employee exceeded

those powers, it was reasonable for them to believe it was within their powers at the time.

No indemnity would be given where an employee failed to exercise reasonable care to prevent a loss, and did not comply with all statutory obligations and regulations imposed by any authority.

iii) The Council does not sell any employee or councillor data as it takes the privacy rights of these individuals very seriously.

The Council's ICT Security Policies and Procedures set out clear guidance and responsibilities for appropriate behaviour for all its staff and third parties to safeguard the Council's electronic information assets. These highlight the relevance of the Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act as legislation which the Council must adhere to in all its operations.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 13 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor T Harris to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Stonewall's Education Champions Programme

In the January 2010 full Council meeting, the Conservatives put a motion to implement Stonewall's Education Champions Programme. We were told twice, in no uncertain terms, that RBC was already signed up to this programme. In fact, it was implied that we hadn't checked our facts, which obviously the Conservative Group had.

After again researching this fact both within RBC and Stonewall, I now understand that the information given was not true. In fact the Council led by your administration had already decided not to sign up to this programme.

Can the Lead Councillor for Education please let our Group know whether he gave full Council information that was known within his directorate to be false because he was so remote from decision making within his directorate that he didn't know, or was there another reason?

REPLY by Councillor Hartley (Lead Councillor for Education and Lifelong Learning):

As Councillor Harris will be aware I have written to the Mayor about this matter and a copy of the letter is attached below:



Cllr Jon Hartley
42 Liverpool Rd
READING
RG1 3PQ

Tel: 0118 926 3952
Fax: 0118 926 2682 or
0118 939 0591(Cllrs Services)

The Right Worshipful Mayor of Reading
Councillor Fred Pugh
Mayor's Parlour
Civic Centre
Reading
RG1 7AE

Labour Councillor Park Ward

Your Ref:
My Ref: jh/af
Date: 05 March 2010

Dear Councillor Pugh

I am writing to you in your Mayoral role as Chair of the Council about the Council meeting held on 26th January, specifically on the debate held around the motion relating to bullying of young people. Further to our discussion during the break at 23rd February Council, recent allegations have made it imperative that I write to you now clarifying the accuracy of a statement I made in that debate, rather than wait until the next Council meeting.

During the debate, there was agreement on the aims of the motion and more generally on the importance of tackling homophobic bullying in schools. However, you will no doubt recall that there was clear disagreement about whether RBC was a member of Stonewall's Education Champions programme. I had been briefed by Education Officers that the Council was a member of the programme, and informed the Council accordingly. Indeed, when challenged on this issue, I quoted from the Council's draft strategy, which clearly states Reading's membership. This information was wrong; Reading Borough Council had not at that point joined the programme. My statement in the Council meeting was clearly an error and it is, of course, regrettable that the erroneous information I had been given, meant that the Council was inadvertently misled. I am sorry that you and the Council were put in this position.

Whilst in this case the inaccurate briefing has not caused any change to the Council's policy, it is clearly vital that the Council takes decisions based on the most accurate information available. This is why I asked the Chief Executive to look into how this error occurred, and how the process of briefing Councillors can be improved. I have also asked him to look into the process of ensuring that when the Council takes decisions, they are clearly communicated to the relevant officers. In this case the officers responsible for our anti-bullying strategy were not made aware of the motion and the joining of the programme was therefore delayed.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that Reading Borough Council is now a fully signed up member of the Stonewall Education Champions programme. Just as we all intended during the debate, Stonewall's expertise is informing the final development and implementation of Reading's Anti-Bullying Strategy.

Looking at the minutes of 26th January Council, I do not think they need alteration as this level of debate is not covered. However, as you know, I thought it was important to detail to you how this error had occurred.

I am copying this letter to other Councillors who were at the 26th January meeting, so that they are all aware of the facts above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Hartley', written in a cursive style.

Jon Hartley
Councillor

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 14 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Epps to ask the Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport:

Report on Parking Services

To ask the Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport, again, to give a simple answer to the simple question I asked on 23 February which he has failed to answer, namely: 'why has the Council failed to publish the independent report of Mary Francis (which described the need for the parking service to be transformed into 'a more customer-focussed and aspirational service')?' Specifically, why is the report not available to the public, given that its contents are likely to be of interest to many Reading residents in the context of the forthcoming public debate about residents' parking in the town?

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport):

Cllr Epps has been told on previous occasions that the recommendations from the consultant's report were included in the Cabinet Report (Item 15) of 28 September 2009 and were set out in full, over four pages, in Appendix 1 to that report. The full Cabinet papers are available to view on the RBC website.

That report and the subsequent report to Cabinet in February 2010 makes it clear that these are the initial stages of a review process that will include a major public consultation exercise this summer involving all those households within residents' parking schemes.

The report by Mary Francis was designed to inform the review process and does not in itself constitute residents' parking policy within the council, and it would therefore be inappropriate to be published in full on the website.

A full copy of the consultant's report was circulated to all councillors last September.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 15 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Goodall to ask the Lead Councillor for Environment and Sustainability:

Business / Commercial Waste

Could the Lead Councillor tell us how much business/commercial waste Smallmead has handled per month, compared to householder waste, since re-opening? Also, over the past three years what proportion of the waste from Reading which went to landfill has been business/commercial waste? What is the composition of this waste *i.e.* office furniture, clinical etc.?

REPLY by Councillor Gittings (Lead Councillor for Environment and Sustainability):

Since opening to traders in April 2008, the Smallmead facility has handled an average of 3,300 tonnes of business/commercial waste per month. That includes a mixture of waste directly delivered by local businesses themselves and Reading's own commercial collections.

Over the same period the average for household waste is 8,100 tonnes per month, which comprises refuse collections from within the re3 partnership, kerbside recycling, green waste collections and public deliveries to the Household Waste Recycling Centre.

That represents a ratio of 29:71 (trade:domestic)

Over the same period as above, Reading Borough Council delivered an average of 247 tonnes per month of commercial collections and an average of 2515 tonnes for disposal that was sent to landfill.

With the successful commissioning of the Lakeside Energy from Waste Facility in February 2010, the amount sent to landfill will be reduced by approximately a third.

I'm afraid it's not possible to give a breakdown of the composition of trade and commercial waste.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 16 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Goodall to ask the Lead Councillor for Communities and Neighbourhoods:

Stolen Bicycles

Following on from my question to the 26 January 2010 meeting, could the Lead Councillor tell us how many stolen bikes were returned to their owners over the last three years, and of these how many had been postcode marked?

REPLY by Councillor Tickner (Lead Councillor for Communities and Neighbourhoods):

The number of bike returned over the last 3 years was:

2007 - 34 returned

2008 - 66 returned

2009 - 36 returned

The police are unable to provide us with the information relating to how many of these would have been post code marked.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 17 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Goodall to ask the Lead Councillor for Communities and Neighbourhoods:

Alcohol-related Antisocial Behaviour

Could the Lead Councillor tell us how many complaints of alcohol related ASB there has been each month for the period of January 2007 to January 2010 in Reading East (split into NAG or ward areas)?

REPLY by Councillor Tickner (Lead Councillor for Communities and Neighbourhoods):

The number of incidents of alcohol related anti-social behaviour made to the council between January 2007 and January 2010 are very few. Most reports of alcohol related anti-social behaviour in this area are made to the police. In total there were 14 reports of alcohol related anti-social behaviour made to the council's ASB team and Housing ASB team between January 2007 and December 2009.

Below you will see the breakdown of reports by ward and by month.

Further information can be obtained through Councillor Page, RBC's representative on the TV Police Authority.

2007	Abbey (East Reading area)	Redlands	Park	Katesgrove
Jan	0	0	0	0
Feb	0	1	0	0
March	0	1	0	0
Apr	0	0	0	0
May	0	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	1
Aug	0	0	0	0
Sept	0	1	0	0
Oct	0	0	0	0
Nov	0	0	0	0
Dec	0	0	0	0

2008	Abbey (East Reading area)	Redlands	Park	Katesgrove
Jan	0	0	0	0
Feb	0	0	0	0
March	0	0	0	0
Apr	0	1	0	0
May	0	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	0
July	1	2	0	1
Aug	0	0	0	0
Sept	0	0	0	0
Oct	0	0	0	0
Nov	0	0	0	1
Dec	0	0	0	0

2009	Abbey (East Reading area)	Redlands	Park	Katesgrove
Jan	0	0	0	0
Feb	0	0	0	0
March	0	0	0	0
Apr	1	0	1	0
May	1	1	0	0
June	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	0
Aug	0	0	0	0
Sept	0	1	0	0
Oct	0	0	0	0
Nov	0	0	0	0
Dec	0	0	0	0

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 18 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Willis to ask the Leader of the Council:

Council Salaries

Would the Leader of the Council tell me how many core Council employees (ie not including school employees) are in receipt of gross salaries worth between £50,000 and £99,000 per annum and how many are in receipt of gross salaries worth more than £100,000 per annum in the current (09/10) financial year, broken down by Council directorate?

REPLY by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

Under Accounts and Audit Regulations senior staff salaries above £50,000 per annum are published in the Annual Statement of Accounts each year in bands of £5k. For the current year (2009/10), not yet concluded, this information will be collated as part of closing the 2009/10 accounts and included in the Annual Statement of Accounts.

Each year the Council's Statement of Accounts is published on the Council's website and therefore the information is readily available to the public. In future we intend to show teaching and non-teaching employees separately.

As there has been no pay award this year for RBC Directors, Heads of Service or the Chief Executive, then I do not anticipate that the figures will be significantly at variance with the figures declared for 2008/09 (and included in the response to Cllr Willis's question to the Leader at the February Council meeting), as follows:

2008/09

Directorate	£50 - £100k	> £100k
Chief Executives / Resources *	25	2
DECS**	24	1
HCC	17	1
ENCAS	17	1

* includes Joint Legal Team

** DECS increase 2007/08 - 2008/09 accounted for by (a) School Improvement Partners (SIPs) appointed (on Soulbury grades) under the DCSF national initiative (6 posts) including some previously counted in school-based figures; (b) part-year appointments; (c) incremental salary scale movement.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 19 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Epps to ask the Lead Councillor for Communities and Neighbourhoods:

Spending on Policing

Could the Lead Councillor list the total amount of Reading Borough Council revenue spending (excluding schemes wholly funded by Government departments) on frontline policing; and give a full breakdown of such spending by item, together with the proportion of Council funds expended as a percentage of the cost of each item?

REPLY by Councillor Tickner (Lead Councillor for Communities and Neighbourhoods):

The Police currently have no definition of front line policing, although consensus would suggest that police officers and police community support officers would represent front line. Using this definition the amount of revenue would be:

Police Community Support Officers - £62,000. This amount is match funded by the Home Office and purchases a total of 4 PCSOs.

This represents 5% of the total gross cost of PCSOs .

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30 MARCH 2010

QUESTION NO. 20 in accordance with Standing Order No.10

Councillor Bayes to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Lifelong Learning:

School Admissions

In the recent round of admissions, what proportion of Reading pupils obtained places in:

- their first choice secondary school;
- their second choice secondary school;
- their third choice secondary school;

and what proportion of the remaining pupils were placed in schools i) within the Borough, and ii) outside the Borough?

REPLY by Councillor Hartley (Lead Councillor for Education and Lifelong Learning):

All Reading secondary schools are their own admission authorities and publish their own admission criteria. As a member of the School Admission Forum Councillor Bayes will be aware that it is important to note that school places are allocated according to the over subscription criteria published in the guide for parents each year. They are not allocated on the basis of the parental preference as listed on the application form.

For the first time this year the co-ordination process gave parents the opportunity to express 4 preferences rather than the traditional three.

Reading Resident Pupils were allocated as follows:-

First preference 68.1%
Second preference 19.68%
Third preference 5.90%
Fourth preference 1.17%

Overall 94.85% of Reading residents were allocated one of their preferences.

The pupils who were not allocated places according to one of the parental preferences 24% were allocated to schools in neighbouring authorities and 76% to schools within Reading Borough.